

QS 10 Q 6:74–83

6.74 Remember when Abraham said to his father Azar: “Do you take idols as gods? I find you and your people manifestly astray.”

6.75 This is how We made Abraham see the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he would have certain faith.

6.76 When night enveloped him he saw a star; He said: “This is my Lord.”

When the star set, he said: “I love not things that set.”

6.77 When he saw the rising moon, he said:

“This is my Lord”, but when it set, he said:

“If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.”

6.78 When he saw the rising sun he said:

“This is my Lord, for it is larger,” but when it set he said:

“O people, I am quit of your idolatry.

6.79 I have set my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, pure in my worship, nor am I one who associates anything with God.”

6.80 His people disputed with him. He said:

“Do you dispute with me about God now that He has guided me?

I have no fear of your idol worship, unless my Lord intends some matter.

My lord encompasses all in His knowledge. Will you not reconsider?

6.81 How can I fear the idols you worship while you do not fear associating with God that for which no sanction has been revealed to you?” Which of these two groups has the better right to feel secure, if only you knew?

6.82 Those who believe and mix not their faith with evil – these shall feel secure and these are rightly guided.

6.83 This was Our argument which We conveyed to Abraham against his people. We elevate in degrees whomsoever We wish. Your Lord is All-Wise, Omniscient.

6.74 (Rappelle le moment) où Abraham dit à ‘Azar, son père: «Prends-tu des idoles comme divinités? Je te vois, toi et ton peuple, dans un égarement évident!»

6.75 Ainsi avons-Nous montré à Abraham le royaume des cieux et de la terre, afin qu’il fût de ceux qui croient avec conviction.

6.76 Quand la nuit l’enveloppa, il observa une étoile, et dit: «Voilà mon Seigneur!» Puis, lorsqu’elle disparut, il dit: «Je n’aime pas les choses qui disparaissent».

6.77 Lorsqu’ensuite il observa la lune se levant, il dit: «Voilà mon Seigneur!» Puis, lorsqu’elle disparut, il dit: «Si mon Seigneur ne me guide pas, je serai certes du nombre des gens égarés».

6.78 Lorsqu’ensuite il observa le soleil levant, il dit: «Voilà mon Seigneur! Celui-ci est plus grand» Puis lorsque le soleil disparut, il dit: «O mon peuple, je désavoue tout ce que vous associez à Allah.

6.79 Je tourne mon visage exclusivement vers Celui qui a créé (à partir du néant) les cieux et la terre; et je ne suis point de ceux qui Lui donnent des associés.»

6.80 Son peuple disputa avec lui; mais il dit: «Allez-vous disputer avec moi au sujet d’Allah, alors qu’Il m’a guidé? Je n’ai pas peur des associés que vous Lui donnez. Je ne crains que ce que veut mon Seigneur. Mon Seigneur embrasse tout dans Sa science. Ne vous rappelez-vous donc pas?

6.81 Et comment aurais-je peur des associés que vous Lui donnez, alors que vous n’avez pas eu peur d’associer à Allah des choses pour lesquelles Il ne vous a fait descendre aucune preuve? Lequel donc des deux partis a le plus droit à la sécurité? (Dites-le) si vous savez.

6.82 Ceux qui ont cru et n’ont point troublé la pureté de leur foi par quelqu’inéquité (association), ceux-là ont la sécurité; et ce sont eux les bien-guidés».

6.83.Tel est l’argument que Nous inspirâmes à Abraham contre son peuple. Nous élevons en haut rang qui Nous voulons. Ton Seigneur est Sage et Omniscient.

سورة الأنعام

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرُ أَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (74) وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ (75) فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْإِفْلِينَ (76) فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْإِفْلِينَ (77) فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (78) إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (79) وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونَنِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (80) وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُم بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (81) الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ (82) وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (83)

Azaiez

Ce texte met en scène Abraham confronté à l'idolâtrie de son père (*Āzar*) et de son peuple (*qawm*). L'échange est sans conteste polémique et les dialogues – si l'on retranche les maigres références bibliques – peuvent tout à fait s'apparenter à ce que Muḥammad aurait pu dire ou entendre face à l'incrédulité des siens (Chabbi 2008: 280–281). C'est du moins ce que le texte coranique suggère lui-même. Pour s'en convaincre, la lecture des versets 80–81 et leur concomitance avec d'autres parties du texte coranique sont éloquentes. Considérons les deux versets suivants présents dans l'épisode abrahamique :

wa-ḥāḡḡahū qawmuhū qāla a-tuḥāḡḡūnnī fī Allāhi wa-qad hadāni wa-lā aḥāfu mā tuṣṛikūna bihi illā an yaṣā'a rabbī ṣay'an wasi'a rabbī kulla ṣay'in 'ilman a-fa-lā tataḍakkara

et

wa-kayfa aḥāfu mā aṣraktum wa-lā taḥāfūna annakum aṣraktum bi-Allāhi mā lam yunazzil bihi 'alaykum sultānan fa-ayyu l-farīqayni aḥaqqu bi-l-amni 'in kuntum ta'-lamūna

Si l'on se réfère aux expressions surlignées, on découvre à l'appui des tables de concordances d'Abd al Bāqī (1962: 436) et de Rudi Paret (1980: 145) qu'elles sont similaires aux discours tenus, pour la première par le prophète *Šu'aib* (Q 7: 89) mais aussi, pour la seconde expression, par l'allocutaire coranique (place symétrique de celle du locuteur ou destinataire premier du message coranique, cf. Ben Taibi 2008: 77–78) identifié traditionnellement à Muḥammad (Q 7:33). Cette proximité des discours entre Muḥammad et les prophètes antérieurs a déjà été soulignée par les spécialistes occidentaux (Nöldeke 1892: 29–30). Elle l'a été également, quoique de manière différente et originale, par l'exégèse musulmane la plus contemporaine, celle en particulier d'Iṣlāḥī (1999: 468–476). Mais, l'évidente relation intra-textuelle entre les discours des prophètes a une incidence méthodologique non négligeable car, dès lors, une interrogation s'impose. En effet, jusqu'à quel point ces dialogues reflètent la polémique dont Muḥammad aurait été le protagoniste (bien entendu, l'hypothèse ne s'éprouve qu'à la condition que ces controverses aient bien eu lieu en Arabie selon la perspective communément présentée en Islam) ? C'est d'ailleurs cette

question que pose explicitement Ettinghausen (1933: 6) dès l'introduction de son ouvrage consacré à la polémique dans le Coran.

Dye

Récit de la conversion d'Abraham. D'autres passages reviennent sur son combat contre l'idolâtrie et la dispute avec son père (Q 19:41–50; 21:51–73; 26:69–104; 37:83–113). Ce texte est cependant à part. Si on suit le *textus receptus*, c'est le seul passage où le nom du père d'Abraham est indiqué. Or le prénom Āzar ne correspond pas au Têrah de la Bible. Il s'agit probablement d'une erreur de lecture : Bellamy (2001: 3–4) suggère de lire *izrā'an*, « contemptuously » (c'est paléographiquement plausible). Par ailleurs, c'est le seul texte coranique qui reprenne le thème de l'observation des astres comme voie vers le monothéisme. Cet épisode apparaît, parmi d'autres histoires, dans le « cycle d'Abraham », dont le *Livre des Jubilés* est l'un des plus anciens témoins. Comme souvent, le Coran propose une variation sur un sujet bien connu dans les milieux juifs et chrétiens du Proche-Orient tardo-antique.

Le récit est très allusif et présuppose la connaissance d'une version plus détaillée de l'histoire (ainsi, on ne sait pas à quel moment de la vie d'Abraham se déroule cet épisode, et presque rien n'est dit du raisonnement qui mène Abraham au monothéisme). On notera plusieurs points remarquables. Premièrement, les vv. 76–79 ne suivent pas, chronologiquement, le v. 74 (Abraham, avant de s'être lui-même converti, peut difficilement reprocher à son père d'adorer des idoles avant de s'être converti). Deuxièmement, il est plausible que le v. 75 fasse référence à un voyage céleste. Est-ce durant ce voyage qu'Abraham se convertit ? C'est une lecture possible, mais on peut aussi comprendre que le v. 75, comme le précédent, est seulement le rappel d'un épisode de la vie d'Abraham, sans que cela ait de rapport direct avec l'histoire narrée ensuite. Troisièmement, l'ordre lune/soleil (vv. 77–78) suit une progression « logique », de l'astre le plus petit à l'astre le plus grand, et un ordre chronologique : dans le judaïsme et l'islam, le jour commence au coucher du soleil, pas au lever. Quatrièmement, dans les récits pré-coraniques, Abraham découvre l'unicité de Dieu par son seul raisonnement, en autodidacte. Or l'insistance du Coran sur le secours que Dieu lui apporte crée une tension entre la morale de l'histoire, telle que le Coran l'emprunte, et la modification qui y est apportée.

Sur *ḥanif* : non pas « païen », mais *Gentil*, c'est-à-dire non lié par la loi juive, mais monothéiste, voir De Blois (2002: 16–25) et Reynolds (2010: 80–87).

Pregill

The theme of the idolatry of Abraham's people is common in the midrash, appearing as early as *Genesis Rabbah* (3rd c. CE), but the most pertinent parallel to this Qur'ānic passage is actually pre-rabbinic. Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* 1.154–168 is one of the earliest portrayals of Abraham's rejection of his ancestral polytheism on account of his observation of the heavenly bodies. As Reed (2004) has shown, Josephus here

puts a uniquely Jewish spin on an older Greek conception of astrology and astronomy as a quintessentially barbarian art; appropriating this “alien wisdom” as the source of Abraham’s discovery of monotheism establishes it as the very foundation of Israel’s religion. Here in Q 6, the progression from polytheism to monotheism via observation of the heavenly bodies is exactly the same. It is striking that the consequence is that Abraham states that “I turn to the one who created the heavens and the earth as a *ḥanīf*” (v. 79). The term *ḥanīf* is of course much discussed, with the derivation from Syriac *ḥanpā*, “pagan,” largely taken for granted, but the implications of its appropriation and subversion are still debated. Syriac sources, which would term the idolatry Abraham abandoned as *ḥanpūtā*, construct the following polarity:

GOOD = virtuous of Israel, Christians = faith of Abraham
 // BAD = Jew, pagan (*ḥanpā*).

The term *ḥanpā* is thus pejorative, marking one who is outside of the true faith, an infidel. The critical move made in the Qur’ān seems to be to shift the moral valence of the term: in identifying the faith it reveals (or revives) as the same as Abraham’s, though it is emphatically *not* Judaism or Christianity (cf. Q 3:67), the Qur’ān reconstructs the polarity as:

GOOD = virtuous of Israel, Believers = faith of Abraham (*ḥanīf*, *ḥanpā* in the new sense) // BAD = Jew, Christian, pagan (*mušrik*, *ḥanpā* in the literal sense)

The mentality behind the shift in the Qur’ān seems similar to that of Josephus. In depicting Abraham as discovering monotheism through the “alien wisdom” of astronomy, Josephus asserts that the worship of one God is an “outsider” development, in contrast to the culture of civilized Hellenes who nevertheless maintained polytheism. The Qur’ān likewise associates monotheism with astral observation, but also specifically marks it as an essentially “outsider” development of “pagans” (*ḥanpē/ḥunafā*), people like Abraham himself who was neither Jew nor Christian. Its claim to outsider status, reasserting the “pagan” (or better, gentile) nature of original monotheism, implies that the corrupt monotheism of Jews and Christians is tantamount to idolatry.

Reynolds

This passage is sometimes compared to the tradition of Abraham’s contest with the idolaters in *Jubilees*. In that tradition, however, Terah (Abraham’s father) recognizes that Abraham is right to reject idolatry and flees with Abraham to Harran in order to escape the idolaters (after Abraham mischievously burns down a temple of idols). Much closer to the Qur’ānic passage at hand is the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (ch. 8), which makes Terah an idolater and describes his conflict with Abraham.

It seems that the idea of Abraham learning not to worship heavenly bodies (a widespread tradition in Jewish and Christian literature as well) is ultimately based in Deut 4:19: “When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars – the entire array of heaven – do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. Yahweh your God has allotted these to all the other peoples under heaven.”

Rippin

I note the use in v. 81 of *amn*, in the sense of “security,” that is contrasted with fear, *ḥāfa*; this pair is then paralleled in v. 82 with belief, *āmana*, in contrast to injustice, *ẓulm*. That belief can overcome the fear of injustice and provide security seems a central theme and the moral of this story.

Younes

As is the case in QS 9, certain linguistic tools are masterfully used to produce beautifully sounding phrases. Consider in particular the contrastive use of *lammā ra’ā* “when he saw” and *lammā afala(t)* “it disappeared, set.” The three verses, vv. 76–78, have a similar structure, with each consisting of three parts. The first part starts with the temporal/conditional particle *lammā* “when” and the verb *ra’ā* “he saw,” the second part consists of *lammā* and the verb *afala* “to set,” and the third part is different in the three verses but ends in the same rhyming letter *nūn*: *al-āfilīn*, *al-qāllīn*, *tušrikūn*.

Zellentin

Abraham intends to take a star, the moon, and the sun as gods, but is corrected (v. 76–8). The scene is difficult to apprehend on its own, but could be understood within the context of a panoply of late antique Abraham traditions, and as the culmination of a long history of the dramatization of a moment in Abraham’s life.

First, the post-Biblical Jewish tradition begins with Abraham’s complete piety. In the *Book of Jubilees* (see Dye), Abraham despises idols from early childhood (11); as an adult he states that all the heavenly bodies are in God’s hands (12:17, the tradition is also preserved in Armenian, and in Josephus, see Pregill). The planets Abraham considers are the same in both texts, yet in the *Book of Jubilees* Abraham has already internalized their status as subservient to God—the very lesson he is about to learn in the Qur’ān.

Second, Abraham is equally pious in the rabbinic tradition, yet here, he begins to explore the possible divinity of objects in more depth—if only to deny it. In the rabbinic version of events, Nimrod confronts Abraham and in turn proposes to worship fire, water, the clouds, the wind, human beings, or the fire. Each time, Abraham retorts that the respective subsequent elements have power over the previous ones (water extinguishes fire, the clouds bear water, etc.), arguing that only

these subsequent ones, and perhaps none at all, should be considered divine (*Genesis Rabbah* 38.13). The rabbinic tradition of the limits of power of a series of natural objects records an element that together with the lack of divinity of the planets known from Josephus and Jubilees will form the core of the later Qur'ānic narrative.

Third, the dialogical exploration of the power of the elements is also preserved in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* VII, a text preserved only in Slavonic, in the Christian tradition. Here, Abraham mockingly explains to his idolatrous father (who is also present in the rabbinic story) that despite their powers, he does not call the objects (fire, water, earth, and the sun) gods. Most importantly for the Qur'ān, the *Apocalypse* contends that Abraham then explains that the sun *could* be taken to be divine (I.7). Here, Abraham lays out his arguments against the divinity of the sun, the moon, or the stars even more fully than in the rabbinic text, yet in doing so explores the realm of polytheism ever deeper, even if still only as intellectual exercise.

Finally, the Qur'ān turns the hermeneutical screw yet a bit further. It mentions Abraham's discussion with his father, the narrative frame in previous traditions, merely in passing (v. 74). The Qur'ān does so in order poetically to bring to life Abraham's *own* struggle with the divinity of the planets, which must have happened *before* he realized that only God is divine. In this struggle, the Qur'ān emphasizes, Abraham "would surely have been among the stray lot" (v. 77) had not God guided him—and this seems to be the punch line of the Qur'ān that emerges when reading it in dialogue with the Jewish and the Christian Abraham traditions, which moved towards this view, but continued to showcase Abraham's immaculate piety. In the Qur'ān, Abraham, in intriguing contrast to the righteousness of many of its main figures, did not and could not break with idol worship on his own, to the contrary, he himself was on the verge of *kufṛ* had not God intervened, and shown Abraham "the dominions of the heaven and the earth" (v. 75)—employing yet another late antique tradition, Abraham's heavenly journey (the *Testament of Abraham*, 10 in Version 1, similar to 8 in Version 2).